DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 143 930 CG 011 709

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TITLE Sex and Status: Influence on the Evaluation of Professionals.
PUB DATE [75]
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association (84th, Washington, D.C., September 3-7, 1976)
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EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Bias; *Changing Attitudes; Discriminatory Attitudes (Social); Evaluation; *Occupations; *Professional Occupations; Research Projects; *Sex Role; Sex Stereotypes; *Social Status

ABSTRACT

The study investigated the acceptance of females in traditionally masculine professions. Subjects were 48 females and 58 males psychology students at the University of Nebraska-Omaha. Each read professional articles in the fields of business, dentistry, engineering and law; author sex and status were systematically manipulated. After reading each article, subjects evaluated the article, author, and profession on three semantic differentials. Multivariate analysis procedures were used to analyse the data. Results showed that neither male nor female, young nor older subjects discriminated against the women authors. Perhaps the "women's movement" has had some impact on the attitudes and thinking of both women and men and thus upon their objective evaluation of women in traditionally masculine roles. On the other hand, the public may be more aware of and more sophisticated about sex-role issues; more sensitive instruments may now be required to discriminate underlying biases based on sex-role stereotyping. Another important finding was that although the subjects in the present study fairly evaluated female and male professionals, a significant number of the subjects were limiting their own aspirations to appropriate sex-roles. Implications for counselors and for further sex stereotyping research are discussed. (Author)

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# SEX AND STATUS:

# INFLUENCE ON THE EVALUATION OF PROFESSIONALS

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It was the purpose of this study to investigate the acceptance of females in traditionally masculine professions by male and female college undergraduates.

The study was intended generally to contribute to the social need to continually examine the variable involved in sex-role stereotyping and sex discrimination which limit the potential of both men and women. More specifically, the study was intended to fulfill a professional need to replicate and elaborate on the well-publicized Goldberg (1968) study in which he asked 40 college women to evaluate six professional articles (two from traditionally masculine fields, two from traditionally feminine fields, and two from neutral fields. The crucial manipulation had to do with the authors' names--the same article bore a male name for one half of the subjects, a female name for the other half, (e.g., John T. McKay/Joan T. McKay). His results indicated that young college women were biased against women professionals in all of the fields, though obvious from the design, the women's work was identical to that of the men.

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This paper was based on a doctoral dissertation submitted to the Department of Educational Psychology and Measurements at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The author is grateful to Robert D. Brown, the Committee Chairperson, for his support and advisement.

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In this study, subjects were asked to respond to articles about typically masculine professions of business, dentistry, engineering, and law. The study examined the differences in responses between the female and male subjects, between the younger (18-22 years) and older (23 years and older) college students, and added author status as an independent variable. Status was included because Pheterson, Keisler, and Goldberg (1971), in another study also based on Goldberg's original model, found that women college students judged female entrees in an art contest less favorably than identical male entrees, but judged the female winners equal to identical male winners. Apparently women known to be successful in their field were given equal status with successful men.

## METHODOLOGY

In this study, subjects were 48 female and 58 male introductory psychology students at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Of the females, 13 were over 22 years of age; of the males, 23 were over 22.

Subjects read four professional articles in the traditionally masculine fields of business, dentistry, engineering, and law. The sex and status of the authors were manipulated so that each subject read one article written by a male-high status author, one a male-low status author, one a female-high status author, one a female-low status author. After reading each article subjects evaluated the article, the author, and the profession on the dependent measures, three semantic differentials.

The design, then, was a 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 mixed model in which the subject variables (sex and age) and the treatment variables (author sex and status) were combined factorially. Each subject was exposed to all 4 treatment

combinations and responded to each treatment on 3 dependent measures (ratings of author, article, and profession) yielding a total of 12 repeated measures for each subject. Figure 1 presents the design format.

| Subject Variables | | Treatment Variables | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Female Author | | Male Author | |
| Sex | Age | High Status | Low Status | High Status | Low Status |
| Females | 18-22 n = | 35* | 35 | 35 | 35 |
| | 23+ n = | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 |
| Males | 18-22 n = | 35 | 35 | 35 | 35 |
| | 23+ n = | 23 | 23 | 23 | 23 |

*The n's are equal across cells as each subject was exposed to all treatment conditions in the repeated measures design.

Figure 1. The Research Design Format Showing the Two Subject Variables, Sex and Age, and the Two Treatment Variables, Sex and Status of the Author

The materials and design were pretested with a group of students comparable to the subjects.

The research task took approximately one-half hour to complete. Debriefing of the subjects was done by mail after all the data was collected.

Multivariate analysis procedures were used to examine the 12 dependent measures obtained from each subject.

Based on the results of related research, it was hypothesized that there would be: (1) a significant difference in the responses on the dependent measures related to the sex and to the status of authors; (2) a significant interaction between sex and status of authors.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The predictions were not upheld. The only interpretable significant effect was that, independent of the sex or status of the author, male subjects rated the professional articles higher than the female subjects, step down $F(1, 162) = 6.04$, $p < .02$. Refer to tables 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Possible explanations for the results are that (1) the subjects guessed the purpose of the study and thus answered guardedly, or (2) the sex and status of the authors were not salient enough to be considered by the subjects. Debriefing of the pretest group minimized the probability of either of the above explanations being valid.

A further possible explanation of the results is that the treatment was not powerful enough to discriminate existing sex-role stereotyping among the subjects. The results seem to indicate that the feminist movement, since Goldberg's study in 1968, has had some impact on the attitudes and thinking of both men and women and thus upon their objective evaluation of women in traditionally masculine roles. More sensitive instruments may now be required to distinguish underlying biases based on sex-role stereotyping.

A secondary but important finding of the study reinforces the hypothesis that the absence of sex-role stereotyping by the subjects may be at a superficial level. For, although the subjects in the present study fairly

**Table 1**

Summary of Multivariate Analysis
for Sex and Status of Author

| Variable | MS | Univariate F | Step Down F |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Ratings of "Author" | | |
| Author status | 377.36 | 6.89* | 1.08 |
| Author sex | 33.96 | 1.05 | .61 |
| Author status x author sex | 2.73 | .05 | .21 |
| | Ratings of "Article" | | |
| Author status | .29 | .00 | .18 |
| Author sex | 216.53 | 2.81 | .97 |
| Author status x author sex | 72.23 | 1.12 | .41 |
| | Ratings of "Profession" | | |
| Author status | 69.77 | 2.23 | 2.72 |
| Author sex | 68.16 | 1.77 | 1.93 |
| Author status x author sex | 3.06 | .08 | .32 |

*df = 1/102, $p < .01$

**Table 2**

Summary of Multivariate Analysis
for Sex of Subject

| Variable | MS | Univariate F | Step Down F |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Ratings of "Author" | | |
| Author | 164.48 | 1.15 | 1.15 |
| Author status x subject sex | 20.26 | .37 | .90 |
| Author sex x subject sex | 27.26 | .84 | 1.49 |
| Author status x author sex x subject sex | 81.26 | 2.08 | 1.70 |
| | Ratings of "Article" | | |
| Article | 157.06 | 2.10 | 6.04* |
| Author status x subject sex | 82.29 | .90 | .42 |
| Author sex x subject sex | 65.90 | .85 | .45 |
| Author status x author sex x subject sex | 42.42 | .66 | .26 |
| | Ratings of "Profession" | | |
| Profession | 7.02 | .12 | .40 |
| Author status x subject sex | .01 | .00 | .07 |
| Author sex x subject sex | 63.97 | 1.66 | .14 |
| Author status x author sex x subject sex | 21.30 | .54 | .04 |

*df = 1/102, $p < .02$

Multivariate $F$ (12, 91) = 1.0544, $p < .4077$

**Table 3**

Summary of Multivariate Analysis
for Age of Subject

| Variable | MS | Univariate F | Step Down F |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Ratings of "Author" | | |
| Author | 33.40 | .23 | .23 |
| Author status x subject age | 59.64 | 1.09 | 1.09 |
| Author sex x subject age | .03 | .00 | .02 |
| Author status x author sex x subject age | 18.73 | .48 | .92 |
| | Ratings of "Article" | | |
| Article | 18.44 | .25 | .07 |
| Author status x subject age | 93.42 | 1.02 | .34 |
| Author sex x subject age | 6.89 | .09 | .33 |
| Author status x author sex x subject age | 4.70 | .07 | .40 |
| | Ratings of "Profession" | | |
| Profession | 20.28 | .36 | 1.17 |
| Author status x subject age | 2.83 | .09 | .50 |
| Author sex x subject age | 28.99 | .75 | 1.12 |
| Author status x author sex x subject age | 64.83 | 1.66 | 2.32 |

Multivariate $F$ (12, 91) = .7056, $p$ < .7423

**Table 4**

Summary of Multivariate Analysis for Interaction of Subject and Treatment Variables

| Variable | MS | Univariate F | Step Down F |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Ratings of "Author" | | |
| Author | 62.92 | .44 | .44 |
| Author status x subject sex x subject age | .13 | .00 | .10 |
| Author sex x subject sex x subject age | 124.19 | 3.83 | 2.67 |
| Author status x author sex x subject sex x subject age | 11.54 | .30 | .01 |
| | Ratings of "Article" | | |
| Article | 50.77 | .68 | 2.07 |
| Author status x subject sex x subject age | 114.30 | 1.25 | 1.31 |
| Author sex x subject sex x subject age | 293.60 | 3.80 | 1.45 |
| Author status x author sex x subject sex x subject age | 32.25 | .50 | .27 |
| | Ratings of "Profession" | | |
| Profession | 10.24 | .18 | .12 |
| Author status x subject sex x subject age | 5.58 | .18 | .25 |
| Author sex x subject sex x subject age | 8.12 | .21 | .09 |
| Author status x author sex x subject sex x subject age | 61.38 | 1.57 | 1.40 |

Multivariate $F$ (12, 91), .8352, $p < .6143$

evaluated female and male professionals, a significant number of them were limiting their own aspirations to appropriate sex-roles, $X^2$ (1) = 28.61, $p < .001$. Refer to table 5. This finding has particular applicability for career and academic counselors, who should be sensitive to client conflicts between becoming "liberated" and limiting themselves to stereotyped career aspirations and role expectations.

**Table 5**

The Frequency Distribution of Subjects Planning Careers in Traditionally Masculine and Feminine Occupations

| Subjects | Occupations | |
|---|---|---|
| | Masculine | Feminine |
| Male (n = 46) | 37 | 9 |
| Female (n = 45) | 11 | 34 |

$X^2(1) = 28.61$, $p < .001$

Along with other recent research (Feldman-Summers & Kiesler, 1974; Heilman, 1975; Pheterson et al., 1971; Taynor & Deaux, 1973, 1975), which has found that sex discrimination depends on the particular situational circumstances, this study seems to indicate that sexism has become less overt. Sexism is not dead; it has merely gone underground. So consciousness-raising is still in order as well as more sensitive measures of sex biases and research with a wide assortment of subjects and various situations. For the results of this study suggest that in abstract circumstances people may be learning to react with little or no bias, but the question remains--do they react the same when they are affected participants in real situations.

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